

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 6728

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: LOCAL ELECTION LAW PASSED

SUMMARY: THE GOVERNMENT ON SEPT 29 PUBLISHED THE LAW PROVIDING FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS ON DEC 12. ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN OVER 300 MUNICIPALITIES AND 4,000 PARISHES. THE ELECTIONS WILL BE A MASSIVE EXERCISE IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION WITH UP TO 50,000 CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR EACH MAJOR PARTY. MAJOR PARTIES, WHICH ARE ALREADY WELL ALONG IN ORGANIZING LISTS OF CANDIDATES, HAVE AN ENORMOUS ADVANTAGE. THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM TO BE USED WILL FAVOR THE SOCIALISTS, WHO HAVE THE BEST-DISTRIBUTED STRENGTH THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. END SUMMARY.

1. THREE ELECTIONS IN ONE: THE GOVERNMENT ON SEPT 29 PUBLISHED THE LOCAL ELECTION LAW. IT PROVIDES FOR ELECTIONS PRIOR TO DEC 15 (MOST LIKELY SUNDAY DEC 12) FOR THE FOLLOWING
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES:

-- MUNICIPAL CHAMBERS: EACH OF PORTUGAL'S 304 MUNICIPALITIES WILL ELECT A MUNICIPAL CHAMBER OF 5-17 MEMBERS. ONLY POLITICAL PARTIES CAN PROPOSE LISTS OF CANDIDATES. SEATS WILL BE DETERMINED ON THE BASIS OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION WITH THE CHAMBER PRESIDENT COMING FROM THE MOST-VOTED LIST. THE CHAMBER, WHICH MEETS MONTHLY, IS THE EXECUTIVE BODY OF THE MUNICIPALITY.

-- MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY: MUNICIPALITIES WILL ELECT DIRECTLY ONE-HALF OF THE MEMBERS IN EACH MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY. (PRESIDENTS OF PARISH EXECUTIVES MAKE UP THE REMAINING MEMBERSHIP.) AGAIN, ONLY POLITICAL PARTIES MAY PROPOSE CANDIDATES AND THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM WILL BE USED TO DISTRIBUTE SEATS. THE ASSEMBLY MEETS THREE TIMES ANNUALLY AND APPROVES THE BUDGET AND ACTIVITIES OF THE MUNICIPAL CHAMBER.

-- PARISH ASSEMBLY: ALL EXCEPT THE SMALLEST OF PORTUGAL'S FOUR THOUSAND PARISHES WILL ELECT A 7-19 MEMBER ASSEMBLY WITH RESULTS DETERMINED BY PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION. LISTS MAY BE PRESENTED BY POLITICAL PARTIES OR GROUPS OF CITIZENS WHO GATHER CITIZEN PETITIONS. THE ASSEMBLY ELECTS THE MEMBERS OF THE PARISH EXECUTIVE. THE INDIVIDUAL HEADING THE MOST-VOTED LIST IN PARISH ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS BECOMES THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARISH EXECUTIVE. THE ASSEMBLY MEETS THREE TIMES A YEAR TO APPROVE THE BUDGET AND REPORTS OF THE PARISH EXECUTIVE.

2. GENERAL ELECTION PROVISIONS: OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ELECTION LAW FOLLOW:

-- LOCAL ELECTIONS ARE FOR A THREE-YEAR TERM.

-- THE 11-DAY ELECTION CAMPAIGN RUNS FROM THE TWELFTH THROUGH THE SECOND DAY BEFORE ELECTIONS.

-- RADIO AND TELEVISION MAY NOT BE USED IN THE CAMPAIGN.

-- MILITARY MEN ON ACTIVE DUTY WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE TO RUN.

-- CANDIDATES FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS MUST BE FORMALLY PRESENTED BY OCT 22.

3. COMMENT: THE LOCAL ELECTION PROCESS WAS DELIBERATELY DESIGNED AS A MASSIVE EXERCISE IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION. PARTIES PRESENTING CANDIDATES FOR ALL AVAILABLE POSITIONS HAVE TO COME UP WITH AS MANY AS 50,000 CANDIDATES NATIONALLY. THIS GIVES AN ENORMOUS ADVANTAGE TO THE MAJOR PARTIES,

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WHICH ARE ALREADY WELL ALONG IN THE ORGANIZATION OF CANDIDATE LISTS. SELECTION OF THE HONDT PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM GIVES THE SOCIALISTS AN ADVANTAGE OVER THE PPD, CDS, AND PCP, WHICH DO NOT HAVE THE STRENGTH THROUGHOUT THE NATION OF THE SOCIALISTS. IN ORDER TO COMPETE IN THE MORE IMPORTANT MUNICIPALITY ELECTIONS, NON-PARTY GROUPS, SUCH AS THE FAR LEFT POPULAR UNITY GROUPS (GDUP) AND THE PPD SPLINTER SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MSD), WILL HAVE TO

LEGALIZE THEMSELVES AS PARTIES. OTELO, THE MOST IMPORTANT
GDUP ASSET, IS PROHIBITED FROM RUNNING UNLESS HE
RECEIVES PERMISSION TO RESIGN FROM ACTIVE MILITARY
SERVICE.
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